ISSUE #3 - DIGITAL ART & TECHNOLOGY

An Overview of Don Bergland's Digital Studio Practice

DON BERGLAND
April 19, 2024

PUBLISHED IN DON BERGLAND SUBSTACK

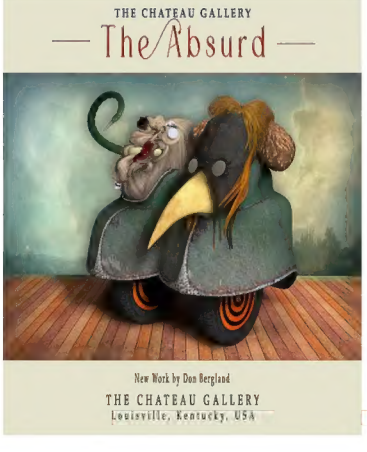
https://donbergland.substack.com/

Issue #3 - Digital Art & Technology

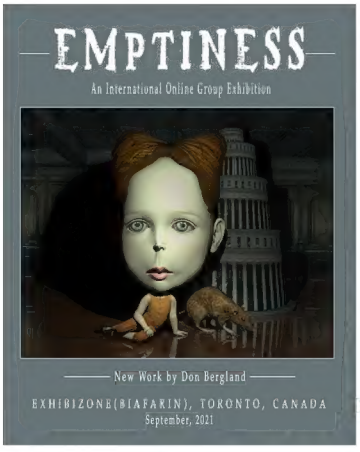
An Overview of Don Bergland's Digital Studio Practice

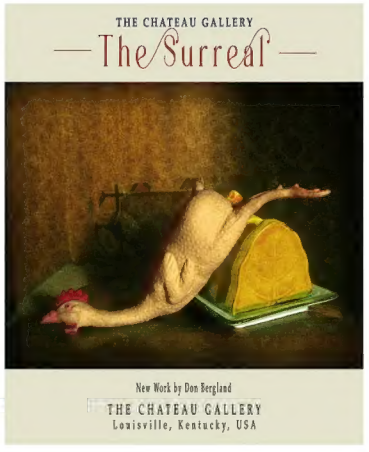
DON BERGLAND
APR 19, 2024

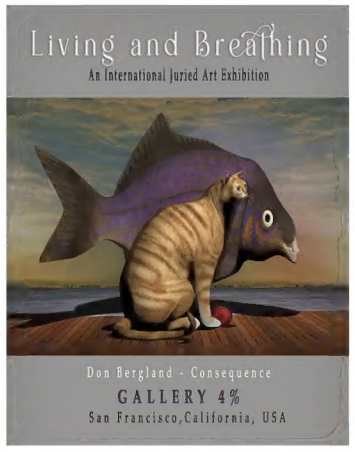
I am an Associate Professor Emeritus of Digital Arts at the University of Victoria and have been an active exhibiting artist for over 50 years. During that time, I've worked through a variety of professional media, from oil on canvas to my current studio use of digital tools and techniques, virtual reality environments, and artificial intelligence. Digital technology is now firmly at the core of my studio practice. I employ the latest technology to maintain an active international exhibiting career and have featured my artwork in over 200 major exhibitions throughout the world.



Colors of Humanity Art Gallery,
Human Nature
An International Juried Exhibition
NEW WORK BY DON BERGLAND
Colors of Humanity Art Gallery, Everett, Pennsylvania, USA







I've always considered myself on the forefront of technological innovation. In 1968, while in the Faculty of Music at the University of BC, I was a member of the new electronic music lab, working with notable new composers and appearing in a variety of experimental electronic performances.

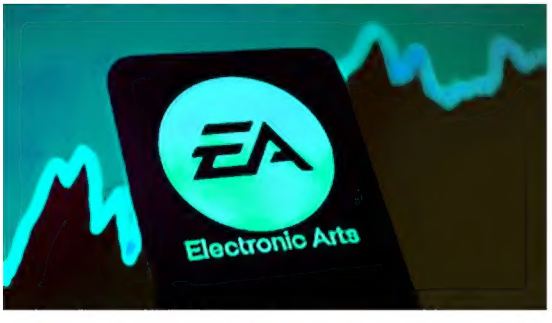
https://donbergland.substack.com Subscribe

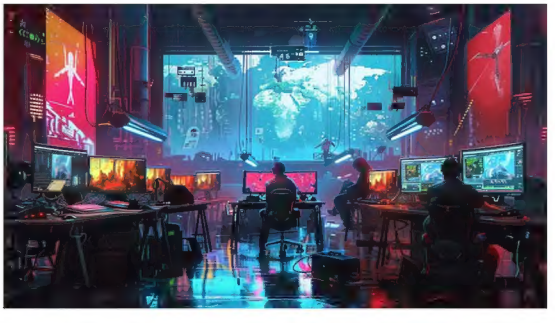
Thanks for reading Don Bergland Studio!

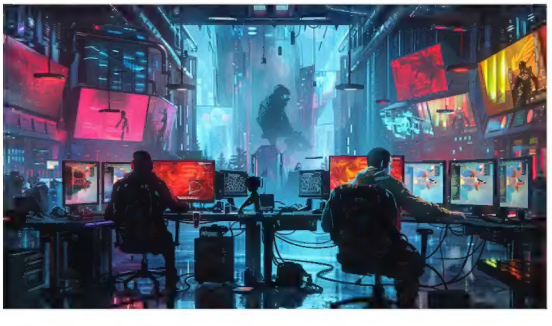
In 1985, I was a graduate student at the University of BC, working with old Sony Graphics editors as a research assistant on a major grant project involving the development of computer graphics for perceptual visual studies. In 1986, I became involved in the very esoteric and innovative digital music and art lab at UBC, mentoring with international digital composer, Theo Goldberg.

I took this early digital knowledge and training to my first university faculty position at the University of Victoria in 1989, and initiated courses in digital art while developing the university's first multimedia studios specializing in graphics, authoring programs, and new media studies.

I took a leave of absence from the university in 1992, and spent several years working as Director of Visual and Audio Arts at Electronic Arts (at that time, the world's largest video gaming company). Here, I guided teams of digital artists and musicians in the production of creative concepts for major gaming platforms while learning how computer production programs were used inside high level industry.







I returned to my faculty duties at the University of Victoria in 1994. I started developing digital production courses while maintaining a vigorous consulting career in industry. I pioneered a series of innovative digital studios at the university in the early 1990s and created a research program which investigated the interface of industry, digital studio practice, and performance.

THE RING

UVic UNIVERSITY OF VICTORIA

Volume 21, Number 1, Jan. 13, 1995

Hiatus in world of video gaming gives prof sharp insights into youth culture industry

By Shelagh Plunkett

Artist and professor Dr. Don Bergland (Arts in Education) has returned to the academic milieu following a one-year immersion in the world of video gaming; a world he describes as dollar driven. His hiatus from UVic was spent as Director of Visual Arts for Electronic Arts (Canada), one of the world's largest video gaming producers. In response to his immersion in electronic arts, Bergland has returned to traditional studio and is working a series of lyrical landscapes executed in acrylics on canvas.

"Some of my colleagues would die for the chance to get in there. But [having spent a year in the industry] I know that [the industry] doesn't allow for good solid creative endeavor," says Bergland.

Bergland is a man with a varied career - professor, painter, sculptor, multimedia artist, writer, radio and video producer, and educator. Born in Vancouver, he has lived, worked and taught throughout BC. Places such as Bowser, Bella Coola Valley and Ucluelet, which appear in his biography, suggest the sense of adventure and exploration which took him away from UVic.

"It seemed like a great opportunity to enhance my creativity. I thought being involved with Electronic Arts would provide me with better opportunities to explore innovative endeavors than the academic world did. I learned that [in the huge studio of 40 artists.

"There was no clear vision for the art department and the artists were working without direction."

Bergland provided that direction, designing a structure for the studio which included a strong vision and focus, training programs, procedures for hiring and firing, and provisions for developing the artists' talents.

His department worked primarily on sports games (soccer, baseball, and race car driving simulators) although, when originally hired, he was given the impression the company was branching into "edutainment" - video games providing education with entertainment.

Despite the challenge, the bright and youthful staff, the money, and computer gadgets at his disposal, Bergland says one year of immersion in the electronic world was enough.

"The dollar is the bottom line. Creative freedom and experimentation are avoided and there is a constant thrust toward distilling more money out of the product. If an idea doesn't generate more money it's dropped immediately," says Bergland.

Bergland says his year with Electronic Arts (Canada) was valuable because it has provided him with a better sense of

instrumental in setting up the Faculty of Education's electronic teaching studio) the artists he worked with during the past year started off unable to articulate their ideas toproducers or directors and, in general, couldn't communicate well with other artists or team members. One of the first things he did was set up a training program to teach them these skills.

After his return, he plunged into the electronic art experience one more time, presenting a large multimedia production, Borax Jamboree, described as an "outré festival of experiential explorations into cultural eccentricities, designed to satirize

THE RING

UVic UNIVERSITY OF VICTORIA

Volume 21, Number 18, Dec. 8, 1995

Multimedia techniques taught at new centre

By Dave Clements

A tiny office in the basement of the MacLaurin Building is the home to some of UVic's most advanced computer technology.

The Multimedia Arts Centre's Dr. Don Bergland and Dr. Dale McIntosh are putting this technology to work, teaching students how to manipulate audio and video material into multimedia productions.

"We're small, but we're getting the maximum we can get out of our programs," Bergland says. "We would like to see ourselves as a development program for students."

The centre, operated through the Department of Arts in Education, currently offers three courses in multimedia production techniques: AE 322, AE 402, and ME 402.

Teaching multimedia means showing students how to integrate audio and visual matter, scripting and storyboarding them into computer productions.

Most students are in the Education faculty, but recently there has been a demand for courses by students in writing, visual arts, computer science, and physics. While the main purpose of the centre is still to train teachers who can share the information with their students, the possibilities for multimedia are expanding.

An example is the increasing use of 3D

Don Bergland Dave Clements Photo

applied for purposes other than entertainment. For example, the use of 3D modeling has become important in the medical field - medical students can now simulate an open heart surgery before actually performing one.

However, some of the most prominent uses of the technology remain in the entertainment field. McIntosh estimates that at least 30 percent of movies made today have an electronic score, as computer technology allows the composer

McIntosh has been teaching music for 10 years in the department, starting with an old IBM clone and a keyboard. later, Bergland began teaching visual arts with the department's computers. Two years ago, Bergland and McIntosh joined forces to create the multimedia centre. They will likely graduate 60 students from the three courses offered.

While Bergland's background is in visual arts and McIntosh's in music and electrical engineering, the partnership has been harmonious, both say. "Don finds the stuff I'm doing more interesting than what he's doing, and I find his stuff more interesting," McIntosh says.

Both professors have had extensive involvement with the technology-based industries, and see endless possibilities for graduates with skills in multimedia. Bergland recently spent some time as director of visual arts for Electronic Arts, one of the largest interactive entertainment companies in the world.

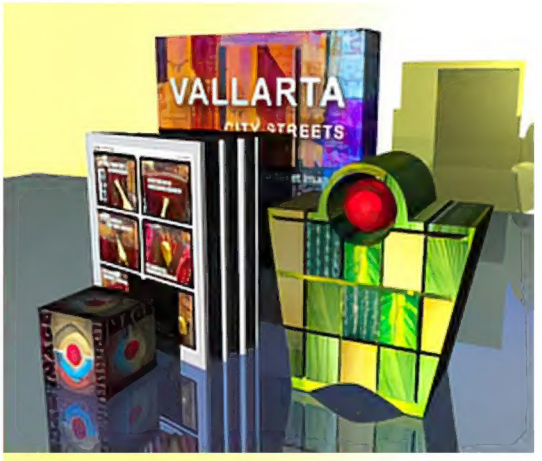
"Both of us are in contact with industry, and we're teaching skills that are relevant to them," Bergland says. "Anything you can imagine doing visually, you can do with this equipment."

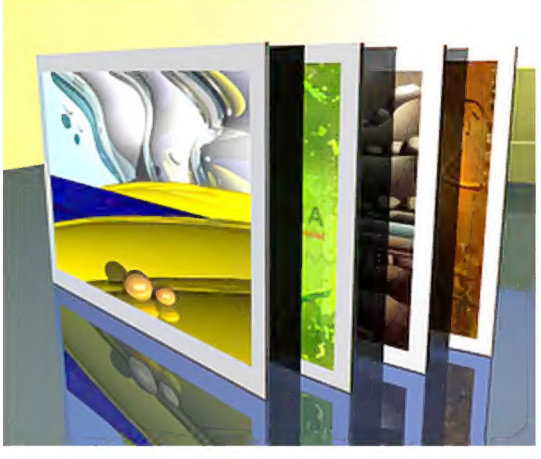
Even technophobes take to the software, he adds.

"At first they're intimidated," he says, "but I've had students who have never touched a keyboard who get into it when they see what it can do for them."

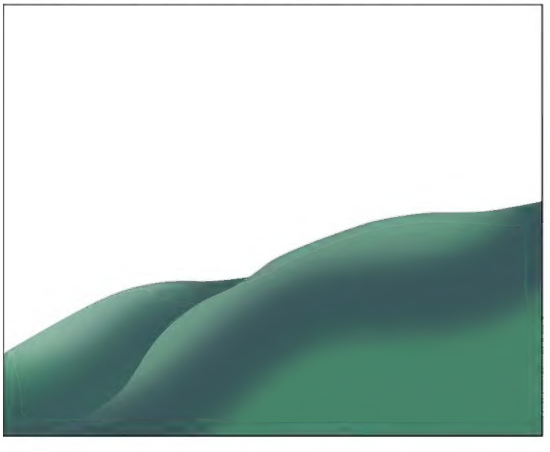
I continued to work in the digital field as art and creative directors for companies such as Entertainment Technologies Inc. (ETI), DNA Media Inc., Collideascope Digital Productions, the CBC, and NASA. I also worked as adjunct professor for Lesley University in Massachusetts, where I traveled throughout the USA delivering graduate programs in creative arts and digital technology.

WE WERE CALLED, "THE FLYING FACULTY





Throughout this activity, I maintained my own studio practice. By this time, I was moving away from my traditional painting style and fully experimenting with digital technology. In 1996, I was still working in a large interpretive landscape style and I decided to convert my entire studio art practice from traditional paint on canvas, to digital techniques and processes.



My research program and courses at the university became very popular and I began an established research program which investigated digital studio practise. I began building and administrating undergraduate and graduate labs and programs which focused entirely on digital art practice.

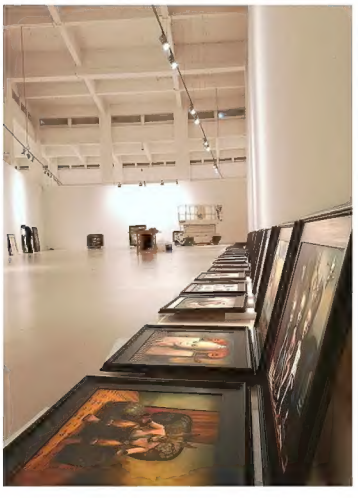
I BECAME A PIONEER IN DIGITAL ART EDUCATION

Using my digital studio processes and techniques, I created my own personal art style which I called “theatrical surrealism” and began exhibiting this new digital style in international juried exhibitions. I reconstructed my digital studio to focus on an integration of 3D modeling software and various graphic processing programs. I began exhibiting the work from this studio in international exhibitions.

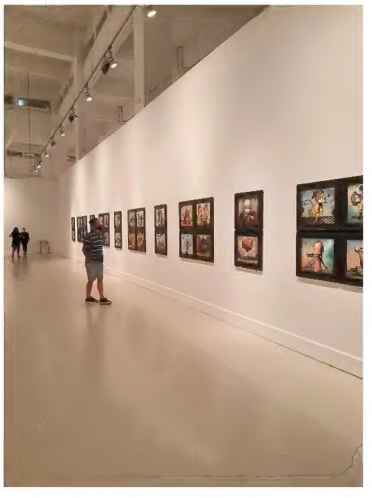
In 2021, I completed a large international solo exhibition called, "Silence of Eternity. This was hosted by the Centro de arte contemporáneo de Málaga, (CAC) in Málaga, Spain. Here, I exhibited 70 framed and printed works from my digital portfolio. This was an amazing opportunity to take work created digitally, and manifest it in a large physical gallery setting.

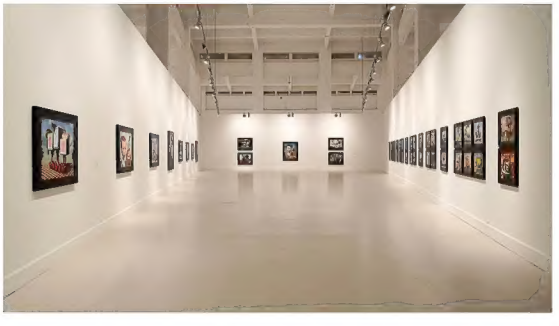
FRAGILE
FRAGILE

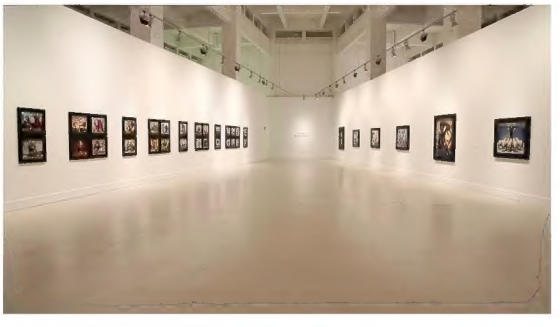
OPEN THIS SIDE
FRAGILE
FRAGILE



Don Bergland
The Elegant Beauty
THE SILENCE OF ETERNITY







During my art career, I've won over 120 creative & professional awards for my work which is represented in major corporate and private collections such as the Gulf Oil Corporate Collection (Alberta), the Madrona Centre Permanent Collection (B.C.), the Canadian Utilities Corporate Collection (Alberta), the Timothy Eaton Foundation Collection (Canada), the Chevron Standard Corporate Collection (Alberta), as well as in private collections in Canada, the United States, and Europe.

Art Show International Gallery
TALENT PRIZE WINNER
Don Bergland - "Simulacrum"
2022 3rd PORTRAIT COMPETITION
ART SHOW INTERNATIONAL GALLERY, LOS ANGELES, USA

Society of Canadian Artists (SCA)
AWARD OF EXCELLENCE
Don Bergland - "Lullaby"
49th Open International Juried Exhibition
PAPERMILL GALLERY, TORONTO, ONTARIO, CANADA

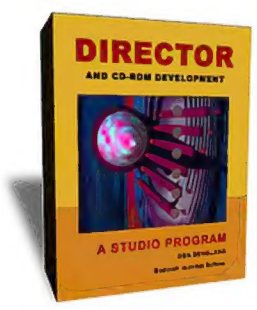
Contemporary Art Gallery Online
BEST IN SHOW AWARD
Don Bergland - "Inquisitor"
2021 "ALL ANIMAL" COMPETITION
Photography & Digital Art Category

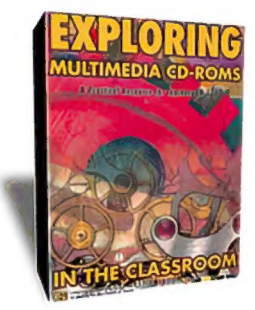
Society of Canadian Artists (SCA)
FIRST PLACE AWARD
Don Bergland - "Agnus Dei"
2020 OPEN INTERNATIONAL ONLINE
SCA, TORONTO, ONTARIO, CANADA

Gallery Omata
BEST IN SHOW AWARD
Don Bergland - "Cherub Go-Round"
2023 "THE GAMES WE PLAY"
International Juried Exhibition - Gallery Omata

I've published a dozen books dealing with art, creative activity and digital technology, as well as published a multitude of articles in scholarly and academic journals.

Canadian Art Teacher
Journal of Creative Arts in Education
BCATA Journal for Art Teachers
Canadian Review of Art Education
Visual Arts Research
Readings in Canadian Art Education





My current studio focus is in using 3D modeling environments to create surrealistic imagery for international exhibitions. I've recently turned his creative focus to the potential inherent in virtual reality and artificial image generation. I currently live and work in Victoria, BC, Canada.

Further explorations of professional digital activity can be found at:

My Art Portfolio site - (Link)
My Facebook Page - (Link)
My Instagram Theatre - (Link)
Now on X - (Link)
And my YouTube Channel - (Link)

Thanks for reading Don Bergland Studio!
Subscribe for free to receive new posts and
support my work.

https://donbergland.substack.com Subscribe